

We can resolve all the questions of what is a living wage by deciding not to pay a living wage in some other country where the political leadership does not care. You can hire 14-year-olds and you can pay them 14 cents an hour. That is not, under any standard, fair trade, and it should not be allowed.

The production from those circumstances of trade ought never come into this country. They should compete with American men and women, working day after day in factories in this country, who expect to compete but expect the competition to be fair.

My intention in the coming weeks is to make a series of presentations about where we are in international trade and what we ought to be doing about it.

First on the agenda that we ought to have is to hold NAFTA accountable to its promises. You cannot pass a trade agreement that had bountiful promises of massive new jobs only to discover that we have lost a massive amount of jobs in our country—and then say, oh, that did not matter. It does matter. Let us make sure these trade agreements are made accountable. If they are not, let us change them.

Second, let us at least stop subsidizing plants that close in this country and move overseas. We had one vote on that last year. I offered an amendment. It was voted down. I tell you it does not require much thinking to understand that if you do not stop the bleeding, you cannot save the patient.

No country ever ought to have a circumstance in which their tax code says, "We'll give you a good deal. If you stay here, you'll pay taxes, but if you close your plant, fire your workers, and move your jobs overseas, guess what, we'll give you a tax break, we'll give you a big, juicy tax break; \$300 million, \$400 million a year we'll give you to do that. Close your American plant and move it overseas."

If we cannot shut that insidious provision in our Tax Code down, there is something wrong with us. I am going to give everybody in this Chamber a chance to vote on this a dozen more times until we get it passed. I hope we can do it on a bipartisan basis.

Let us enforce existing trade agreements. Let us stop the dumping of products into this country that, by their cost, drive American producers out of business.

It is sad that we do not stand up for this country's economic interests. That has been true of Republican administrations and Democratic administrations. It has been true for 20 to 30 years.

Let us stand up for this country's economic interest to say that fair trade must be enforced. Let us enforce trade rules.

Let us develop a national trade deficit focus. Yes, let us worry about the budget deficit and let us together solve that problem. But also let us together in the coming months decide the trade

deficit is a serious national problem that erodes the economic strength of this country. Let us get together and decide to do something about it.

Let us organize a worldwide conference to decide it is time for a new Bretton Woods Conference and talk about the new financial markets and the new trade relationships that will take us into the next century. Let us be frank. We cannot afford what has happened in the last 50 years.

Let me show you the final two charts. This chart shows that foreign imports now take over one-half of the manufacturing gross domestic product in this country. That is a very serious problem. If you do not have a strong manufacturing base, you will not long have a strong economy in a country like ours.

Second, let me show you this chart. If anyone doubts the problem, let me show you a chart that shows the 50 years post Second World War.

In the first 25 years, as I said, we could compete with one hand tied behind our back. Our trade policy was foreign policy. Everybody knew it, everybody understood it, and everybody accepted it. In the last 25 years our competitors have been tough, shrewd, and often they have beaten us to the punch.

Yes we still have a trade policy that is first a foreign policy. It is one that too often is a giveaway of American jobs to other countries. And you see what has happened. While we have a trade deficit, the other countries have a surplus.

This chart simply shows that Japan, Germany, and other countries in the last 25 years have a surplus and the United States has a deficit.

How do American workers feel about this? They had enormous wage gains in the first 25 years, post Second World War. In the last 25 years they have suffered wage losses. And it is because of this. This is something we can address and fix.

I, Mr. President, appreciate your indulgence and the indulgence of my colleagues. I intend to come to the floor in the coming weeks with four additional presentations, the deficit with Japan, China, Canada, Mexico, and Germany. I will discuss what it is, what we can do about it, and what does this country have a responsibility to do to address these issues?

Mr. President, I appreciate the indulgence of the Chair, and I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

The Senator from Wyoming.

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I would like to speak in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wyoming is advised we are in a period of morning business until noon. The Senator shall have 5 minutes to speak.

Mr. THOMAS. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. President, I was interested in our colleague's remarks. Certainly he talks

about a very important issue. There are a number of things we need to consider. One of them, of course, is what we continue to do to make business more and more expensive in this country making it more and more difficult for us to compete.

AGENDA FOR THE NEW YEAR

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, I want to talk more specifically about this coming year, and, frankly, some about the past year, this coming year in terms of the agenda that is set for this country, the agenda that is set for this Congress, more specifically for the Senate, the agenda that is set for the American people and the things that need to be a priority for us as we move forward in this important, important year.

Last year, we talked about a number of things. We talked about a number of issues, largely as a result of, I think, what the voters had said to us in 1994. They said the Federal Government is too large, it costs too much, and we are overregulated. Obviously, that is a simplistic analysis, but I think it is true. I just spent 2 weeks in my State of Wyoming, as you have, Mr. President, and I think that message continues to resonate.

We are talking about doing things that are important for American families. We are talking about doing things that will help bring up the wages and the level of living of Americans, which has slowed. We are talking about balancing the budget, because balancing the budget is the moral and fiscal thing to do, it is the responsible thing to do, but it also has results. It lowers interest rates. It helps create jobs, so it has an impact on each of us.

We are talking about reducing spending. Certainly, most everyone would agree that this Government has expanded far beyond what we ever thought it would. We celebrated Abraham Lincoln's birthday over the last several weeks. One of the things that President Lincoln said is that the Federal Government ought to do for the people those things they cannot better do for themselves in their own communities, and that is still true. We need to evaluate what we do and see if we have gotten away from that concept.

We need to talk about regulatory reform. The Senator from North Dakota was talking about the difficulty of competing in the world. Part of that is because we have made doing business so very expensive. It is not that we want to do away with regulatory protection—we can do that—but we can do it much more efficiently and do it in less costly ways.

We need to talk about welfare reform, partly because of the costs, partly because all of us want to help people who need help, but we want to help them help themselves and do it in the most efficient way that we can.

So, Mr. President, I guess what I am saying is that those concepts still

exist, and we need to continue to push to do that. We have not been able to bring to closure some of these things that we have tried to do over the past year, largely because most of them have been vetoed by the White House. Many of them have been opposed by our friends on the other side of the aisle.

Balancing the budget: We came within one vote of getting a constitutional amendment to ensure that the budget would be balanced. We need to continue to do that. I think that is a critical item for our future, for our kids and for our grandkids.

We have made some progress in reducing spending, but we need to tie that in to the future so that through the changing of entitlements that will continue. If we do not do it, it will be right back up.

Regulatory reform passed this Senate. We have not been able to get it past the White House.

So the results, Mr. President, have been that we have had slower growth. Unfortunately, we hear these reports in the State of the Union that this is the best economy in 30 years. Sorry, but when you examine it, it is not very good. We had 1.9 percent growth last year. In the last quarter, we had a .9 percent growth.

If I had charts like the Senator from North Dakota, I could show you the earlier years, in the eighties and prior to that, growth was more commonly in the neighborhood of 3.5 to 4 percent. That reflects in the ability of families to earn a living, a living with which they can support their families.

Mr. President, I hope that we can establish a priority, an agenda for this year, and I hope that we can spend our time on that; that we can move forward.

I am not discouraged by the fact that we did not come to closure last year. On the contrary, I am encouraged with the fact that we are now talking about a balanced budget. Two years ago, we were talking about a budget that had a \$200 billion deficit, as far out as you could see. We have not talked about regulatory reform before. We are now talking about that.

So we have changed the discussion in this body, and I think we need to pursue that. I think we need to do it for economic growth. We need to do it so that people in this country and wage earners can enjoy the same kind of prosperity that we have had in years past. We do that, I think, by some tax relief, capital gains tax relief that encourages investment and encourages the economy to grow. We need to do it by regulatory relief so that businesses will have more money to pay. There will be more jobs and more competition, which causes wages to go up. We need to have a balanced budget so we are not only fiscally responsible but so we can bring and keep interest rates down so there will be encouragement for investment.

After all, the real role of economics in this country is for the Federal Gov-

ernment to establish an environment in which the private sector can function. That should be our priority for this year.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ASHCROFT). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996—CONFERENCE REPORT

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair lays before the Senate the conference report to accompany H.R. 2546, the D.C. appropriations bill.

The clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

The committee of conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on the amendment of the Senate to the bill (H.R. 2546) making appropriations for the government of the District of Columbia and other activities chargeable in whole or in part against the revenues of said District for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes, having met, after full and free conference, have agreed to recommend and do recommend to their respective House this report, signed by a majority of the conferees.

The Senate resumed consideration of the conference report.

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, once again we are here debating the District of Columbia appropriations bill for the current fiscal year, which is now fully 5 months old. The city began the year strapped for cash and it has not received \$254 million of Federal funds that will be available once this bill is enacted.

The kids in the public schools are still faced with a community and system that has not made them a priority. The Committee on Public Education, known as COPE, is a group of local civic and business leaders who have spent nearly 6 years studying the D.C. public schools. In its report a year ago is stated that too many remain too invested in the status quo. COPE also found that the District has not really tried reform.

The kids in many District public schools continue to attempt to prepare for life in the next century in school buildings that were built in the first half of this century, and are in deplorable physical condition. Many schools lack the infrastructure to accommodate the same technology that the neighborhood grocery store employs.

If we do not begin the process of educational reform and fiscal recovery by passing this conference agreement we can never hope to achieve the goals we, the Congress, set for ourselves last year. A financially fit and economically stable Nation's Capital that is able to attract businesses, jobs, and

people to support a tax base that will enable a public education system that prepares our kids for the future is an absolute necessity for this community and for our Nation. If we cannot do it in the District, where can you?

Mr. President, we have a limited amount of time for debate and I do not intend to restate the arguments that were made on Tuesday. But it is important to restate that this scholarship program, limited, in both time and scope, is not the occasion for a national debate on the question of private school vouchers. We have an appropriations bill that should have been enacted months ago. We resolved most of the issues, some of which were controversial and the subject of intense discussion, including the other education reform initiatives, in relatively short order. But we had great difficulty finding common ground on a scholarship program, which had to be a part of this conference agreement with respect to the interests of the House.

Mr. President, I hope that Senators will consider the financial plight of the District government and the educational future of D.C. kids when they cast their vote today and not the fears of a few who are invested in the status quo. I ask Senators to vote for cloture and allow the city to get on with its important rebuilding work.

Mr. President, I will briefly mention again two other issues. We have gone over the abortion issue many times, and about what was reached as a compromise between what the Bush and Clinton administrations did. I talked to you yesterday and, hopefully, removed from your mind any concerns about Davis-Bacon problems. If there are concerns under the interpretation, we are ready to take care of that before this goes into law.

So I urge Senators, please, review what was said yesterday and please pass this conference report by allowing us to have cloture.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and reserve the remainder of my time.

Mr. KOHL addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Wisconsin is recognized.

Mr. KOHL. Mr. President, just 2 days ago, on Tuesday of this week, the Senate failed to invoke cloture on the conference report H.R. 2546, the District of Columbia appropriations bill. The vote was 54 to 44. For the benefit of Members who may have turned their attention to other matters, let me inform the Senate that we are about to repeat Tuesday's vote. However, and unless Chairman JEFFORDS otherwise indicates, I am unaware of any developments affecting the issues that led the Senate to reject the first cloture motion. My position therefore remains the same, and I urge Members to vote against the motion to invoke cloture.

Although I am urging Members to oppose the motion at hand, I do so with great reluctance. As Chairman JEFFORDS and I have already indicated, the District is in dire financial straits. The